Incidentally it might be noted that Saint Vādirāja got the inspiration for undertaking such a pilgrimage from the Mahabharata Tatparya Nirnaya XII.278, पृथ्वीं प्रदक्षिणत एत्य समस्त तीर्थस्नानं यथाक्रमत एवविधाय पार्थः। सम्पूज्य तेषु निदिवेकेषु हरिं सुभक्त्या कृष्णे समर्पयितुमप्रथ प्रभासम्। The Pandavas had similarly toured the earth in a pradakshina fashion worshipping Sri Krishna in all these pilgrim centres after Arjuna's receiving the Paashupata astra; they were guided by the sage Lomasha. They completed the tour in Prabhāsa. Vādirāja Svaami also did likewise touring the country Pradakshina-wise, starting from Udupi, going northward in the first chapter; in the second, he goes northward ending with Badari in the Himalayas; in the third, he goes east via Kashi, Puri Jagannatha, Conjeevaram and ending with Kumbhakonam Shaarngapani. The last is the South Prabandha. The Pandavas had ended with Prabhāsa to prostrate before Krishna, and our saint winds up his first chapter with the description of a few lakes and the Gopi chandana found nearby. This Prabhase in Saurashtra or Gujerat is also famous as the ancient Triveni since the three rivers Sarasvati, Hiranyaa and Kapilaa commingle their waters here, the Kapilaa washing its waters into Sarasvati; this latter flows into the Hiranyaa, which flows with all the waters into the ocean. It is reported that after Krishna's foot was wounded by the arrow of the hunter named Jaraa, He gave up His body at this spot. That is why the holy spot is also called Dehotsarga Teertha. Let us hear the saint's sloka: सरस्वतीहिरण्याभ्यां सङ्गो यत्रापराम्बुधेः।
प्रभासारयं तदाभाति प्रभाऽऽस हि यतो भुवः॥

That holy spot where there is the commingling of the waters of the ocean with the waters of the Sarasvati and Hiranyaa rivers, that spot is called Prabhaasa since the world itself derived its lustre from that spot!

It might be noted that the first prayer in this work starts with the word Hari and the last word in the last sloka is Shriyah. The Saint here implies that the two highest gods are these; here again one might note that the letter Ha of the first combined with Ya in the last refers to Haya, the horse representing his tutelary deity

The Saint has also followed the usual convention in temple rituals that the very last ceremonial worship is the cradling of the deity to sleep; so the 44th verse in the fourth chapter requests fittingly the deity to sleep in the cave of the devotee's heart exactly as He sleeps on his couch, Adishesha Serpent. The Saint's verse runs thus:

यथा गुहामुरेवनाथ शेषे शेषे रमापते ।
तथा हृदि गुहामध्ये अधिशयीनो रमस्व मे ॥

This naturally reminds us of the appropriate भुजङ्गप्रयात metre in verse 6 of this last chapter wherein the saint has worshipped the God sleeping on Adishesha in the midst of the Kaveri waters in Srirangam. How the mellifluous verse imitates the serpentine gait deserves to be noted, the liquid letters in the first line नवांभोदलीलः स्फुरद्धेमजालः स्मरश्रीनतोलः सुरश्रेणिपालः, श्रिये रङ्गधामास्त्वयं पुण्यनामा मदीयस्वयं गुणस्तोम भूमा ॥ May the God-bluish like the newly formed cloud, resplendent with clusters of bright jewels, spotted in the minds of His devotees, possessing a meritorious name, Himself the very acme or limit of supreme prosperity, and possessing a host of virtues, — residing in Sri Rangam, confer prosperity.

The poetic imageries reflect profundity of the worldly experience of the society at the time in which our devotee lived. A father's affection for his daughter sometimes overrides all other considerations and often he lives with the daughter, finally to reside permanently also in her husband's house even. The father Vishnu (in verse 21 of the Uttara Prabandha is so fond of his daughter Ganga that He lives with her in different forms as Narayana (in Badari), as Rama in Prayaga, as Gopalakrishna in the confluence of the Alakananda with Ganga, as Trishikesha, as Ananthasayana in Jahnu, as Govinda in Hastinapura, as Upendra, as Hari in Haridwara, as Shveta Varaha in Sookarakshetra,

as Venee Madhava in Prayaga, as Bindu Madhava in Kashi, as Udaara Madhava in the point where she washes her waters into the ocean. Not satisfied with his living with His daughter almost everywhere before she gets married, He lives with her in her husband's house, the ocean also. Let us now hear the words of the poet:

(3)

श्रीनारायण राम गोपति हृषीकेशादि रूपो ऽक्षम:
त्वां द्रातुं हरिसूकराकृतिरथ श्रीदेवहूत्यामज:।
वेणीमाधव बिन्दुमाधवतनु: तीरे ऽयधत्त स्थितिम
गङ्गे किं बहुनाधुनापि वसति त्वत्तीरगेहे ऽप्यसौ ॥

(The first letter श्री here might suggest that He lives with His wife also) Commentators refer to the way in which Vishnu resides in Ganga waters – द्रवरूपेण गङ्गाभो नात्र संशय: and also यमन: समुद्रे कवयो ऽवयन्ति. His suggestive references to गङ्गास्नान and गङ्गापान (sweet water) deserve also to be noted. The Vitthala on the bank of the Tunga river is described in a memorable verse (Purva 13) thus:

पौर्वाभात निबद्धचारुचरण: पाशैघ तौर्यादृ धै:
बद्धस्त्वं पथि कुण्डरीकमुनिना नारेति सम्बोधित:।
तुङ्गातीरगतो ऽसि विट्ठ ! दिशान्यायाकृतिर्वाञ्छितम
वेत्तृणां यदि मे न दास्यसि पदं त्वत्संस्थिति: कथ्यते

The poet imagines the deity Vitthala on the Tunga bank almost as a very close playmate whose deficiencies are easily known by him. To avoid being made fun of as one whose legs were tied by His mother for His theft of curds and butter, the deity seems to have migrated slowly to the south. But the sage Pundarika detected Him and even had the audacity to address Him as Jaara, as one who had illicitly loved the Gopees. The poet seems to address Him who had resorted to the river Tunga in a different form so that here at least His antecedents might not be

known, 'O Lord! I know all these escapades of yours - if thou dost not confer mukti on me, I will expose your sinful past and make the place too hot for your habitation!'

(4) The Srinivasa deity on the Tirupati Hill is described by the saint in a lovely manner:

आरूढगरुडस्कन्धं आलिङ्गितरमाधरं ।
आनमज्जनसर्वस्वं आश्रये वेङ्कटेश्वरम् ॥ Poorva, 23.

The Lord has His seat on Garuda's shoulders, He is embracing Rama (Lakshmi) and Dhara (Goddess Earth), He is the entire wealth of His devotees, — Such a Venkatesha I resort to! The Hill was known as Sheshaachala and this fact we are reminded of in the next verse:

काशीपूकृत्य यं शेते गिरीकृत्यापि तिष्ठति ।
अवतीर्णोऽनुजीकृत्य स तमस्त्रागणीः कृती ॥

The serpent Shesha becomes His Bed; later it has converted itself into this mountain; he had already become Rama's younger brother Lakshmana so he is one of the greatest devotees of that Lord!

Ahobala Nrisimha's Mahobala or mighty strength enables us to care a tuppence to the miseries of Samsara wherein we are confronted with the wicked in the form of darkness. We might draw the reader's attention to one or two of the five verses in the Canto:

अहोबलनृसिंहस्य महोबलमुपाश्रिताः
असत्तमिस्रमिश्रां गणयामो न संसृतिम् (4)

यः स्तंभे प्रकटीबभूव स मयि स्तंभायितेऽपि स्फुटे
भूयाद्यो भवनाद्दीनीतटगतः खिन्नोऽस्मि मेऽसुं भवम् ॥
योऽपाङ्गैः कमठप्रसौ नरहरिः सो व्यालिशां पातु यः
रक्षोऽशिक्षदसौ प्रभुः खलकुलं शिक्षेद रक्षाप्रियः ॥

The God who manifested Himself from a pillar is sincerely prayed to protect the saint himself who is himself as simple and ignorant as Prahlada!

The Pushpaka Vimana takes Sri Rama back to Ayodhya from Lanka. Kalidasa describing its movement across the sky present us with a very alliterative sloka wherein it is described as going the path of the gods sometimes, of the birds in the next moment, of the clouds for some distance; we might say that Kalidasa's flight of imagination also moved and soared high in the poetic sky. Vadiraja is also an equally gifted poet and his imaginative mind takes us on from one poetic imagery to another.

(5)

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